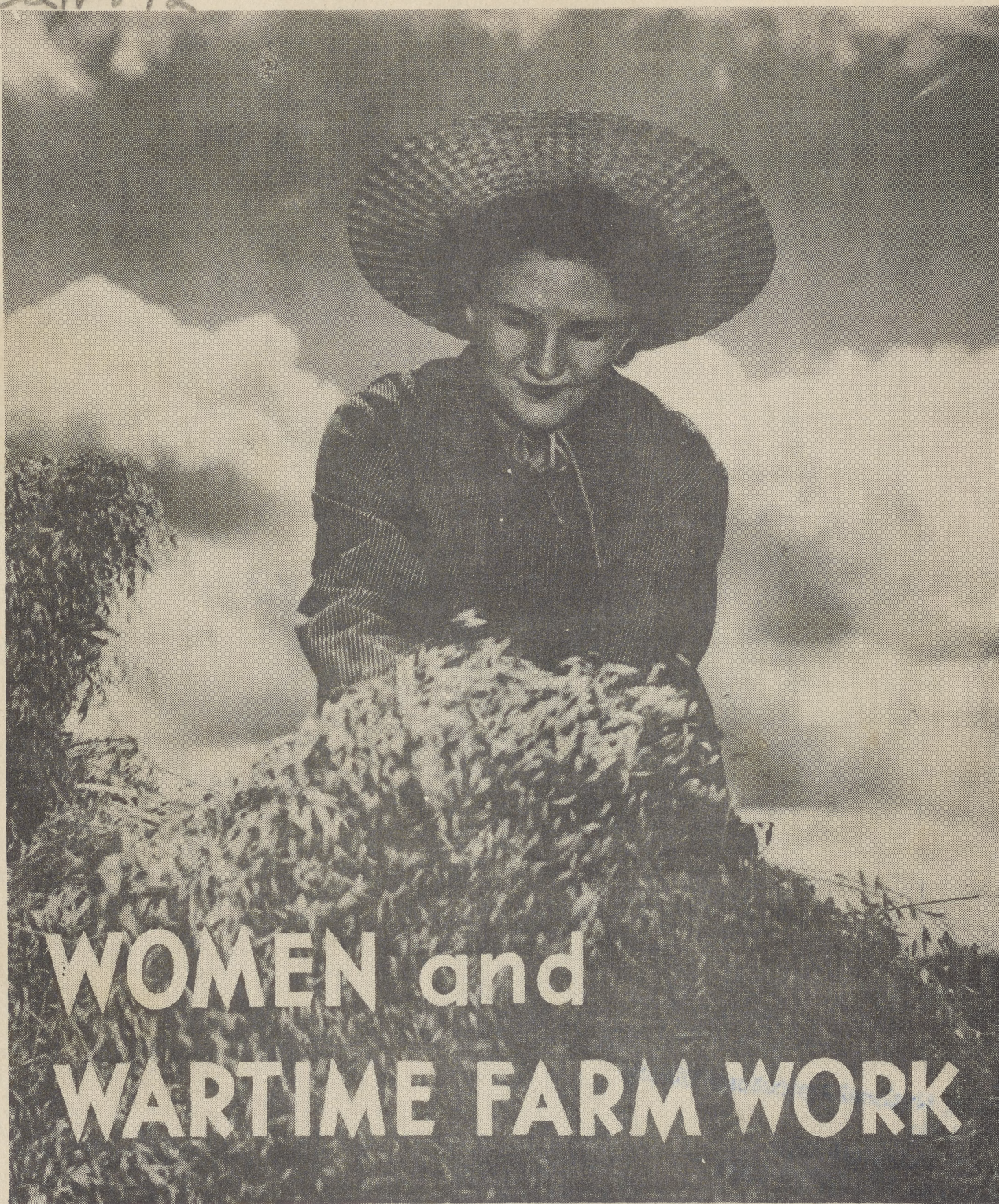


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WOMEN and WARTIME FARM WORK

A study of eight Midwest States in 1944 made by Frances W. Valentine
for the Women's Land Army Division of the Farm Labor Program,
Extension Service of the United States Department of Agriculture

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

Frances W. Valentine served as a consultant in the Women's Land Army Division during July, August, September, and October of 1944. During this time she visited eight of the Midwest States to observe women's work on farms. Her observations are summarized in this publication.

We wish to express appreciation of the co-operation given Miss Valentine in connection with this study by extension directors, farm-labor supervisors, and WLA assistants.

This is Miss Valentine's third study of the Women's Land Army. As a member of the staff of the Women's Bureau, United States Department of Labor, she has written the following circulars:

Successful Practices in the Employment of Nonfarm Women on Farms in the Northeastern States, 1943.

Employment of Nonfarm Women in the Agriculture of the Pacific Coast, 1943. (Now being printed.)

Florence L. Hall

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WOMEN AND WARTIME FARM WORK 1/

A STUDY OF EIGHT MIDWEST STATES, 1944

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"It looks like you've sure got the world by its horns," wrote a farm boy soldiering in France to his sister. He had just received a picture showing her driving a tractor down an endless expanse of cornfields on their family's Nebraska farm.

Women alone did not make 1944 the biggest food-production year in Midwest history, but they were one of the deciding factors; without them the central Midwest States would not have had enough labor to plant, cultivate, and harvest their huge allotment of the Nation's wartime food supply. Because farm women worked harder and for longer hours, doing farm jobs never before done by them, and because city and town women answered the call for help to offset the shortage of experienced farm hands, the Midwest States were able to do their full part in providing food for the civilians and armed services of our own country and for the peoples of the nations with which this country is interdependent. This satisfying response by women to their Nation's need was everywhere recognized in these States. On all sides one heard: "If it hadn't been for the women and girls, we couldn't have got the work done."

THE WOMEN'S LAND ARMY

In 1943, the Extension Service, War Food Administration, United States Department of Agriculture, believing that women could and would help in farm work, provided for the development of a Women's Land Army in its Farm Labor Program. This army was to be a program of work rather than an organization of persons. Its purpose was to recognize and encourage

1/ Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

the women already on farms, in the work they were increasingly taking over, much of which they had not done before, and to recruit and place inexperienced nonfarm women who were willing to help wherever they were needed.

Although farm women in the Midwest region had gone ahead with the farm work they knew must be done, and for which men were not available, the possibilities of using inexperienced nonfarm women had not been so fully recognized or tried out in these States as it had on the East and West coasts, where the acute labor shortage had come earlier. An assistant to the farm-labor supervisor, to be in charge of Women's Land Army activities, was appointed in seven of the States visited. Her responsibility was to assist in recruiting women when and where needed and to promote and direct their contribution.

THE AGRICULTURE OF THE REGION STUDIED AND LABOR NEEDS

The labor needs of any section depend largely upon the type of agriculture practiced, so, before making plans for the employment of women, a study was necessary of the agriculture of this region and of the labor needed. On both the East and West coasts it had been found practical to use large numbers of nonfarm women for cultivating and harvesting many vegetable and fruit crops. But, although many of these same crops are found in the Midwest, the prevailing type of farming in this region is different, as it centers largely around grain and livestock.

Agriculture

These great midwestern States stretching from the foothills of the Alleghenies in eastern Ohio to the foothills of the Rockies to the West are called the "bread basket" of the United States. Level or gently rolling, with fertile soil of great depth, they make up the richest agricultural region of the country. Only a few States ^{2/} outside this region have a comparable income from grain crops, dairy cattle, other livestock and livestock products.

These products differ materially from those of both the East and West coasts, where vegetables, fruits, market milk, and poultry predominate. The West coast raises much grain and livestock, but its output nationally is less than that of the Midwest in these products.

The chief Midwest crops are corn, wheat, oats, rye, barley, alfalfa, hay, and soybeans. With all this feed at hand, these States have become the leading livestock group, raising and feeding great numbers of hogs, cattle, dairy cows, and sheep, and turkeys and chickens.

In addition, these States have many other agricultural products. Wisconsin is our greatest milk-producing State; in fact all of them are great milk-producing States. (Most of the milk, however, goes into butter, cheese, canned and dried milk.) Peas in Wisconsin; sugar beets in Michigan; tomatoes in Indiana; berries and other fruits in Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin;

^{2/} California, Minnesota, New York, and Texas.

peaches in Illinois all are important agriculturally. Every State grows some potatoes.

Truck or market-garden vegetables are grown near the large cities, but are not of major importance for this region as a whole.

Labor Needs and How They Were Met

The major labor needs on the farms of these Midwest States were:

1.-Year-round help on large dairy and livestock farms.

Farm women helped here, and occasionally a nonfarm woman was hired. The larger farms could generally get necessary help.

2.-The summer-season extra hand on the prevailing wheat and "corn-hog" farms.

Such farm hands were needed to help with stock, with tractor driving, with haying and harvesting grain and corn. This was the big labor need and the one largely filled by the farmer's family - his wife, daughters, and young sons.

3.-Corn detasseling and harvesting special crops of all sorts, from strawberries and asparagus to hay and corn.

For this work, imported male labor 3/ large groups of nonfarm women, and still larger groups of school boys and girls all were used. Much of this labor was needed for short periods only.

WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO LABOR NEEDS

Jobs Reported by Farm Women

Year-round help.

Such help as was furnished by women for year-round jobs came largely from farm women, although there were instances of nonfarm women's taking year-round jobs.

Two women were employed on a big dairy farm in Illinois, where a barn crew of six was kept. Since this was one of a number of company-owned farms, the women lived at a small hotel in the nearest village, 3 miles away. The company let them use a truck to go back and forth. Thus the factor which so often kept women out of such jobs - that they must live in the farmer's family - was avoided. Both these dairy workers were about 20, one the wife of a soldier. When met they had worked on the farm 4 months, and both planned to stay for "the duration." The soldier's wife hoped that she and her husband might have a farm of their own when he came home, or that both might work where she was at the time. Each of the women started at \$65 a month, and board, which later was increased to \$80. They did all the regular barn work - milked, cleaned the cows and cared for the calves - and

3/ Mexicans, Jamaicans, Bahamians, prisoners of war.

Jobs Done By Both Farm
And Nonfarm Women

Jobs done by farm women

Tractor work:

Ploughing
Disking
Harrowing
Cultivating
Mowing
Raking

Work with horses:

Mowing
Raking
Stacking

Trucking-

Grain
Hay

Corn-

Detasseling
Picking

Combine Operation

Reaper Operation

Work with cows:

Milking
Care of milk
Butter making

Working on hay baler

Irrigation:

Setting lath boxes

Farm chores:

Vegetable gardening
Care of poultry
Care of hogs

Filling silos

Mixing feed

Jobs done by nonfarm women

Orchard and vineyard:

Thinning-
Peaches
Apples
Picking-
Peaches
Apples
Cherries
Grapes
Packing-
Peaches
Apples
Tying grapes

Corn-

Detasseling

Truck crops and berries:

Asparagus cutting
Hoeing
Weeding
Picking-
Berries
Beans
Pickles
Tomatoes
Onions
Potato-
Cutting
Packing
Grading

Grain-

Shocking
Trucking

and to a small extent

Dairy barn-

Milking, hand and machine
Weighing and recording
Feeding
Cleaning:
Barn
Cows
Milkroom and utensils

Hay baling

Tractor and truck driving

Working on pea viner

took care of the milkroom. The farm manager said he was much pleased with their work; they were industrious, learned quickly, did just as well as men, and received the same pay. He also had four girls working on other farms whom he would have been glad to keep permanently, but they had to return to school in the fall. These four girls, together with the men employees, boarded at the superintendent's house.

Another woman took a job on a general farm operated by an elderly couple. She helped with everything, stayed the year round, and received \$75 a month and board.

In general, however, in the States studied, finding a farmer who would hire a woman for a permanent job was almost impossible, nor was it easy to find women who wanted to take such a job.

The summer-season extra hand or "hired man."

What everyone on the general grain-hog farms needed was someone to do all sorts of tractor driving and to help with haying, harvesting, corn picking, and care of the stock. Sometimes, however, such a hand was not needed all summer, but just for haying or harvesting. This was when farm families, not being able to hire men, took over the jobs themselves.

Wives went into the fields and did work they had not done for years or perhaps had never done. But the fact that they had never done a job before did not deter them. "We can learn," they said, and when tractor schools for women were opened they attended, then came home and practiced what they had learned.

Daughters who had been away in school or employed in cities came home for vacation, for all summer, or for "the duration" and "made a hand." Girls in farm families who had not had a chance to work outside because there were boys to do it, learned to operate machinery and liked it. The boys left on the farms did men's jobs.

Some farm girls, if there was not enough work at home to keep them busy, "hired out" to neighbors by the day for various kinds of farm work; these girls were in good demand.

Most farm women, besides doing all the work of the home - washing, ironing, cleaning, cooking, much sewing and general home upkeep - take care of the chores. These include helping with the milking (usually but not always); and care of the milk and milking utensils, all the poultry, the home vegetable garden after the ground is prepared; and the home lawn and flower garden. Now, in addition, they went out and helped in the fields. ^{4/}

They drove tractors for plowing, disking, harrowing, cultivating, mowing, and raking. They drove teams of horses if they did not have tractors.

^{4/} Though some women had done this before, most American-born farm women had not.

They even drove horse-drawn "sweeps" or buck rakes, a hard job for anyone. They worked on hay loaders, sometimes even made stacks. A few drove combines; many drove binders and shocked grain. If the wheat was threshed, they drove the bundle wagons; trucked the grain to the elevators and dashed there and back with a big 2- or 3-ton truck or a trailer hitched to the family car. Some of them picked corn and made the toss to the wagon unerringly. They fed stock, hauled out hay in winter, rode fences, and helped in the fall round-up on cattle ranches.

The only question was, how they could take it. Many women said they doubted if they could keep on doing so much strenuous work. One said she had lost 15 pounds during corn planting and cultivating in the spring and early summer, but was "gaining it back now." She was 4 feet, 10 inches, tall and weighed 102 pounds at the time she was interviewed. She and her husband had alternated in running the tractor from 4 in the morning till 11 or 12 at night, ploughing, disking, cultivating, mowing, hauling the oats when it combined and shoveling it into the bin. This couple, farmed 160 acres, and had 3 cows - the woman made butter and sold extra cream - and 20 heifers "for our boy (in the Army) when he gets home," 950 chickens and 200 layers to care for. All summer she and her husband hauled 5 barrels of water a day for the 88 hogs. The house was attractive, and the well-equipped kitchen immaculate. The farm was rented, had no electricity, no telephone, no water in the house, and no B-batteries for the radio. "I would like to be able to get the war news over the radio," this farm woman said.

On another farm the daughter, a girl in her twenties, had come home 3 years before to make a hand when her brother went into the Army. With her father she did the work on a 400-acre farm in an irrigated section. They had 200 acres of corn and 55 of grain, 13 cows (which this girl milked by hand), 40 head of cattle, 4 horses, poultry, hay, and pasture. She drove the tractor, ploughed, disked, mowed, and did other work. "It sure gets tiresome sitting on this tractor all day. On the big tractor I could get up and stand for a change, but not on this one." She also drove the "sweep" or buck rake with a team of horses. When asked what she thought was the hardest job, she said, "Setting the lath boxes for irrigating the corn." The farm home was pleasant, and a well-cut lawn with flowers and trees gave it a pretty setting. "I sure work hard on that lawn," she said. "I mow it twice a week." A younger sister helped her mother in the house, which had electricity, telephone, and radio, but the water came from a pump outside. When asked how she compared with a man, her father said, "She's as good as any man and better than most." She was 5 feet, 9 inches, tall and weighed 135 pounds, and said she would "always rather work outside than in."

Even if you had lived on your own farm for 21 years and had never helped in the fields, it was not too late to begin, as another woman found out in 1942, when hired help went into other war jobs. Her first job was cutting alfalfa and, though she started off "with very meager instructions", she eventually became a full-fledged hay hand. From that she went to driving the tractor to pull the combine; then was promoted to plowing, which she found "had quite a lot to it." Later she was given "a strong hint to

pick corn," and did it. She canned tomatoes in the early morning during haying time, so that she could drive the horse rake in the afternoon. She helped on the hay baler and trucked grain to the elevator. Finally she was taking part in all the work, and not complaining. "I have gained the respect of my husband and son who thought me frail and weak," was her comment.

Some women were doing practically all of the farm work with the help of their boys while their husbands continued their pre-war jobs off the farm. One husband was working for the railroad ("he quit farming in the dry years"), but retained his 160-acre farm. In another family with an 80-acre farm, the husband did long-haul trucking. In both cases the wife and young boys did practically all of the work, the husbands sharing the planning and giving occasional help.

The three boys on one farm did most of the tractor and field work, the eldest doing a man's work. This boy's mother said, "His father put him on the tractor when he was 7, he always liked machinery." The 13-year-old son listed the corn. On this farm, they raised corn, other grain and hay, and had cattle, hogs, dairy cows, poultry, and pasture. On another farm the wife did all the field work, the boys being too young. She raised corn, wheat, alfalfa and other hay, melons, tomatoes, and vegetables for pickles, had cows, hogs, and chickens. Her husband helped occasionally.

These families, representing four different States, are typical of what thousands of farm women and girls are doing.

Opportunities for Nonfarm Women

It might well be asked, "What about some of these town and city women and girls?" Many of them were eager to help on what they called "real" farms. The WLA State supervisors had applications from girls and women not only in their own State, but from many outside the State as well. These women were not all inexperienced. Some were agricultural-college trained, others had had good practical experience and were qualified to take responsible jobs. Some had been trained for tractor work in the schools of their own State. But most were admittedly inexperienced, though eager to learn. They were not, for the most part, "hunting thrills and glamour," but they would not work for a dollar a day, and did not want to do housework permanently. When given a trial, these women were reported to be willing, industrious, quick to learn, and uncomplaining.

"Why weren't they helping out the farm women who had so much to do?" The reasons were clear:

1. The farmers' wives did not really want these women, even for housework.
2. Farmers doubted their ability.
3. If anyone was willing to try them, a dollar a day and board was about what farmers were willing to pay.
4. If farmers took them, they would be employed primarily as hired girls to help in the kitchen.

Farmers' wives were fearful of strange city women; they felt that these women would be used to greater comforts and conveniences than the farm afforded and would look down on the farm home. They also had a poor opinion of city women's ability and felt they could not do just as they pleased about meals and housework with an outsider in the home. Farmers' wives had been glad, as far as home life was concerned, when they got rid of their hired men, and they didn't want to substitute women workers. Farmers themselves, though generally skeptical about what a town or city girl could do, were sometimes open to conviction. Generally, however, they did not think she should be paid so much as an inexperienced man, even if her qualifications were as good. But in the last analysis, the wife, not the husband, made the decision.

Farm families have seldom hired any help for the house, and though theoretically the farm women would have been glad to have had some help with the housework so they could be free for outside work, when it came right down to it, most of them thought a girl or woman in the house "would be more trouble than she was worth" and sincere offers from friends or relatives, even, had been refused sometimes.

These prejudices cannot be quickly overcome. When farm families were willing to make an effort, some real successes were attained. One big cattle ranch took a college freshman (she was, to be sure, a friend of a niece of the family) to help both indoors and out, and she worked so well that the farm wife said, "I think anyone would be glad to have a girl like her to help."

Another farmer, in spite of the fact that his hired man said he would quit if the farmer did employ women, wrote to the State WLA supervisor for four women to drive tractors. Following is his summing up of their value:

"September 29, 1944

"Received your inquiry today about my experience with the Women's Land Army and decided to answer right away. If I delayed perhaps I would never get at it again.

"First, I was in an awful jam or I would never have tried them. Then I saw the article in the newspaper and decided to try anything once. Now I will say that they were eminently successful, and helped me get the job done. If I could have had them a month earlier, it would have helped a lot more as they could have harrowed or disked and I would have gotten my crop in earlier. I don't believe plowing would be so easy for them. They drove tractors for me on side rake, pick-up baler, rotary hoe. And trucks to pick up hay in the field. One girl had never driven a car, but before she left she had driven all four tractors and three trucks of various manufacture. One girl got homesick at the end of 1 week and left. She was an extra good worker too, but only 18 and apparently missed her home too much. The biggest factor to their success was their patriotic attitude. They came to help - rather than make a lot of money. Although I paid \$18 per week when local help of like caliber was getting \$15, plus board, but I felt I couldn't be a piker either, and probably won't go broke anyway. Of course

there were many days when there was no tractor work, and they cut weeds, hoed weeds in the corn, helped in the garden, lawn, and house, etc. I imagine the novelty of the work was an aid to them too. All my friends helped them and soon saw the good work they were doing too, as we did some baling for neighbors. No matter how hot the day, there were no complaints.

* * * * *

"The boys in the armed forces should know the remarkable work done by these women and farmers' wives. Certainly thousands and thousands have done far more than could normally be expected of them. No matter how hard the rest of us work, it can be dismissed by saying 'we're paid for it' whether justly or not, but you cannot possibly say that of the average woman farm worker."

On another farm - a fruit and vegetable farm with a roadside stand - where girls had come from a camp to work by the day, the farmer and his wife were so pleased with them that when the camp closed they took two into their family to continue working for them. The girls did so well that the farmer and his wife went away for a little vacation while they were there.

Apparently one of the best ways to get farm families used to the idea of nonfarm women workers was to have them come by the day from some WLA camp. Then the farmers had no responsibility for these workers outside their work, did not have them in the family, and could figure their value by the quality of their work.

Corn detasseling and harvesting.

Harvesting berries, other fruits, and vegetables required thousands of hand laborers, and in these jobs the nonfarm women gave their most valuable service. In many States, women from the cities and towns helped to shock grain. They were employed to cut asparagus, thin peaches, and later to pick peaches, cherries, and apples; to pick^{up} and grade potatoes, to work on pea vingers, to pick snap beans, to truck grain to the elevators, and lastly, to detassel corn, probably their most important job.

Corn detasseling was a job of major importance in the States and required thousands of workers - women and youth. Years of research have produced a hybrid seed corn from crosses of original varieties, inbred to fix desirable characteristics. When these foundation stocks are crossed to produce the hybrid seed corn, it is essential that only cross fertilization occurs - that there is no self-pollination. Therefore, all the tassels or blossoms at the top of the stalks in certain rows (called the "female" rows) are pulled off before pollen ripens and falls on the corn silk of its own stalks. All pollination then comes from the rows of the other variety or cross (known as the "male" rows). Usually there are two male rows to six female rows. The detasseling must be practically 100-percent complete; 1 percent of failure would condemn a field for seed corn. The hybrid seed corn that results from this practice produces corn far superior to the ordinary seed corn formerly planted.

To detassel corn, the workers walk between two rows, reach up, grasp the tassel and pull it out, do not break it off. The operation is simple, but the constant reaching and looking up are fatiguing until the muscles get used to it. As the corn may ripen unevenly, because of weather conditions, it may be necessary to go down the rows again and again, sometimes 10 or 12 times to insure getting every tassel. Sometimes machines are used. These have a metal superstructure that can be raised or lowered according to the height of the corn and the workers stand on a platform and pull out the tassels as the machine crawls along. This not only makes the work go faster, but enables women shorter than 5 feet, 4 inches (required height for detassellers) to take part.

Labor.-Since it is essential that enough workers to take care of detasseling be available the moment corn is ready, and to keep on without let-up sometimes 24 hours a day, 5/ 7 days a week, till the job is done, the hybrid seed corn companies must be sure they will have enough labor ready. In Illinois, fearing there would not be enough local labor (persons up to that time had not been signing up in sufficient numbers), several companies asked the WLA supervisor to recruit city women for four "corn detasseling" camps. In addition to these, many groups of nonfarm women and youths went out from nearby towns on day haul for corn detasseling. In all States they had plenty of workers for this job, and sometimes more than they could use.

Pay.-One reason the large number of women and girls were available for detasseling was, that they were paid by the hour and paid well. Pay ranged from 45 to 65 cents an hour - at the lower rates, often with a bonus of 10 cents an hour for standing by until the job was finished. Workers usually were paid extra for overtime (over 8 or 9 hours) and for Sunday or seventh-day work, but not always time and a half or "double-time", although some companies paid that. The head of one company said he himself would not take a job at piece work, not knowing at all what he could make, nor did he expect women to. Undoubtedly, good pay as well as good working conditions generally did much to attract local workers also. Some of them were earning as much as \$40 a week, though that amount did not represent average earnings.

Another factor that helped to enlist local women was the employment of outside women. Almost invariably, where this was done local workers were stimulated to join up on the theory, perhaps, that if women found it worth while to come from Chicago for this work, local women would find it worth while also.

Working conditions.-Working conditions for corn detasseling in Illinois 6/ were good. The companies took the workers out in trucks, and brought in anyone who might feel ill. One company kept a well-equipped first-aid room in town, with a graduate nurse in attendance.

5/ Detasseling machines have big head- and tail-lights.

6/ The time of visit permitted detasseling to be seen only in Illinois, but detasseling was thought to be much the same elsewhere.

Drinking water was provided in 10-gallon kegs with a faucet, or in 5-gallon thermoslike containers. An ample supply of individual paper cups was also provided. (This was the only field work where such a provision was noted.) The chief lack seemed to be of places where the workers could wash before eating lunch, and of any sort of toilet facilities unless the worker happened to be near a farmhouse sometime during the day. -

Hours.-Generally hours were 8 or 9 a day, and, at the peak of the rush season, might be more. Where detasseling machines with floodlights were used, three 8-hour shifts worked. Lunch period lasted 1 hour.

Supervision.-Company supervision of the workers was generally by capable, intelligent, and understanding men; sometimes high-school or college teachers worked with the hybrid seed corn companies in the summer. Women and girls were not overworked.

Quality of work.-Quality of the women's work, was uniformly good and dependable. One man in charge said it was the best job of detasseling he had ever had done, not excepting that done in the years before the war, when many farmers and their boys did it in their slack time.

Day-Hauls

Women (and girls and boys) who went out to work by the day and returned home at night, were the largest group of nonfarm workers in this region.

Labor.-Recruited usually by the Extension Service farm-labor offices from towns in agricultural regions, these workers were the housewives, teachers, high-school girls - any women not tied down to a home or a job - and some who were, but did farm work anyway.

These women met the farmers at some appointed place and were trucked out to the fields and orchards where they worked. They generally did the same job all day and every day, weather permitting, as long as the work lasted.

Pay.-Much of the work was by the piece: Picking beans, 2 cents a pound; asparagus, 2 cents a pound; tomatoes, 10 cents for a 35-pound hamper (girls could pick enough to fill 60 in a day); cherries, $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 cents - and even 5 cents - a pound (2 to $2\frac{1}{2}$ cents was the prevailing pay). Other work was by the hour: picking up potatoes, 50 to 65 cents an hour; picking peaches, 50 cents an hour; thinning fruit, working in truck gardens, weeding, hoeing, picking some vegetables, 40 cents an hour; working on pea viners, 60 cents an hour. From all that could be learned, it is probable that, except for corn detasseling, 40 to 50 cents an hour was commonly paid to nonfarm women who worked in fruits and vegetables, although special jobs might pay more. Women who drove grain to elevators probably got \$5 to \$7 a day.

Hours.-Generally hours were 8 or 9 a day, but might be less for jobs such as grain shocking, which was done late in the afternoon for a few hours.

Generally an hour was provided to rest and to eat lunch, which the workers brought with them. If they were on piece work, however, they usually took less time. Drinking water was brought to workers during the day; too often it was in a can with a cup or dipper for common use. Usually no washing and toilet facilities were provided in the field.

All these day haul workers were people who belonged in agricultural communities - local people, who knew a lot about farming, whose own living, perhaps, was closely tied up with the success of the farmers. But girls who were recruited for the WLA camps were from cities. Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Des Moines, Kansas City, Omaha - any one of these cities - could have furnished (and some did) plenty of recruits.

WLA Camps

Probably no other single thing did so much to establish better relations between city and town women on the one hand and farm families on the other, as the camps for women farm workers set up by the WLA. Many city women and girls had their first experience of farm life when going out from WLA camps to work on farms. They found that the farmers were well-informed men, who treated them with great consideration and patience. They found that farm women took pride in their attractive, well-equipped homes and could do more things than anyone would believe possible; that farm children were capable beyond their years and generally well-behaved. On their part, farm families found the city women were eager to learn all they could, anxious to make good in farm life and to win the families' approval; that they were industrious, worked hard, were cheerful and pleasant; that they liked to joke, were willing to lend a hand anywhere, and if a rainy day kept them from working outdoors, would have been glad to help with any work in the house.

There were exceptions on both sides, of course, but in these States as on the coasts, the feeling of city farm workers and farm families became one of mutual friendship and better understanding. "I'll be seeing you next summer," often followed the goodbys.

When organized.-Camps were set up for women in only three of the States included in this study - Ohio, Michigan, and Illinois - and only at the request of farmers themselves. Although that way of getting a new idea adopted doubtless is sound, it is not always the quickest.

Sometimes some of the farmers themselves, who had had women workers in 1943, asked that they might have the women again; sometimes the county agent had called a general meeting and asked what the farmers thought about it. But the initiative for the WLA camps set up in these States definitely came from the farmers, and usually was the result of some experience with women workers the year before. One farmer, employing 6 to 8 women, said, "I tried to get them last year but was too late, and this year I applied to the county agent in plenty of time."

Purpose.

1. In Ohio four WLA camps for women (some of these eventually included a good many 16- and 17-year-old high-school girls) were set up along the northern lake counties to furnish labor for fruit, berry, and truck farms. Average attendance was 150 women. The camps were open from mid-June to September and served 57 farmers.

2. In Michigan, of four WLA camps three were for cherry picking only, on the Traverse peninsula, and lasted 3 to 4 weeks each, with an average attendance of 110. Those in camp worked for 26 farmers. The fourth operated 66 days and accommodated a total of 136 workers on berry, fruit, and vegetable farms. These women worked for 21 farmers.

Three other camps were requested, but housing and staff for them could not be procured.

3. In Illinois the hybrid seed corn growers asked for four camps. Three were organized for women, one for junior girls. These camps were for periods determined by the state of the corn. All opened in July and ran for about 2 or 3 weeks. Each camp served one company.

The original request had been for 500 women and girls, but as larger numbers of local women applied, after they had heard about the camp, and as the recruiting was very hurried at the end, both the companies and the WLA were glad to compromise on 107 women and 103 girls from outside.

Housing.-The housing used for the WLA camps falls into two groups:

1. Furnished houses, all ready to take over. These included a large manor house, a college fraternity house, a college rooming house privately owned but not being filled during vacation, a small group of tourist cabins. All these were completely furnished, with bedding included.

2. Other housing. This consisted of a high-school gymnasium, a small Grange hall, an American Legion hall, a 4-H county fair building, a small Y.W.C.A. outside building, a fresh-air home, and community house. Cots, mattresses, and bedding had to be furnished for all these, and much other housekeeping equipment. In only one instance did the women pay for rooms, when the charge was \$3.75 a week.

How camps were financed.-Camp expenses were roughly divided among the workers, the farmer-employer, and the Farm Labor Program. The money paid for board was supposed to cover the cost of food and the wages of cook, and cook's helper if there was one. The farmer-employer usually contributed something toward the expense - in Ohio 5 cents a working hour, and in Michigan a contribution was agreed upon. In Illinois, one employer met all housing expenses, one paid for rooms, one made arrangements for housing and supervision, but most campers paid \$3.75 a week for rooms. The salary of the camp supervisor was paid by the Extension Farm Labor Program, except in Illinois, where the employers carried that expense.

In some camps the cost of utilities, electricity, fuel, and water usually was paid by the Emergency Farm Labor Program, sometimes by the employer.

Board for campers.-All Michigan and Ohio camps furnished board at camp, and the help of the State college nutritionist was available in planning meals and food. Two of the Illinois groups had to get their meals at public restaurants. This was more expensive and the food chosen probably was not so nourishing as a carefully planned camp diet would have been. For the third Illinois camp, the hybrid seed corn company had set up a cafeteria near the high school for all its workers, and the women could get adequate food at reasonable prices. Where board and lodging was furnished by the WLA, the cost usually was \$8 a week.

Transportation.-Various ways were employed for transporting workers from their homes to the camps. Where large groups were recruited for one company, it usually paid transportation to camp, and if workers stayed till the job was finished or if they were sent home because they were unsatisfactory, return transportation, too. This was rather hard on good workers, who could stay perhaps only 2 weeks, the full length of their vacations.

In Ohio, transportation was paid both ways by the Emergency Farm Labor Program if the girls stayed a month.

In Michigan, workers paid their own fares to the camps, but if they remained 2 weeks, return fares were paid by Emergency Farm Labor Program. Transportation, where a large group of workers left at the same time, was usually by chartered bus, but sometimes by train.

Daily transportation from camp to places of work and return was always provided by the employer, who came for the workers in trucks, family cars, or even a family car with a small two-wheel trailer.

Hours.-Workers usually left camp about 7 a.m. and were back by 6 p.m. or earlier. The work day was 8 or 9 hours, usually with an hour for lunch. Weekly hours were usually 48 to 54, rarely but 44, and in corn detasseling work up to 56 (seven 8-hour days). Women were given adequate opportunities to rest. Practically all camps guaranteed employment 75 percent of the time.

Pay.-Rates of pay for camp workers were practically the same as for day-haul workers (see page 11). Several employers, who were paying 40 to 60 cents said they preferred hourly rates, that the workers were more careful than if on piece rates. At two cherry-picking camps where an analysis of several days' picking at 2 cents a pound was made, covering about 150 workers, camp "A" had an average of 5-1/10 lugs (or 127 1/2 pounds) for each girl who earned \$2.52 the first day; and an average the second day of 6 1/2 lugs (or 162 1/2 pounds), worth \$3.26. At camp "B" the average number of lugs picked by each worker on an hourly basis for 116 woman-days was 5-1/10 and the average earnings \$2.74.7/ See page 10 for discussion of pay for detasseling. In Ohio an hourly wage of 40 cents prevailed; in Michigan piece work prevailed, with hourly rates of 40 to 50 cents. Workers preferred harder work at higher rates.

7/ Pay was generally 50 cents, but sometimes 60 percents per lug.

Sanitary facilities.-In WLA camps under the supervision of the Farm Labor Program, drinking water and sanitary facilities had to be approved by the public-health authorities. Some camps had only simplest facilities, outside latrines and enamel washbasins on outside benches. That was considered all right if these facilities were well cared for and kept clean.

Few of the camps had adequate facilities for bathing or for washing clothes, and some had an inadequate number of toilets.

Drinking water was carefully looked after at the camps, but at many, if not most, of the farms drinking water was brought out in a can with a common drinking cup. Some campers took out jugs of water from camp.

Seldom were there any toilet facilities in the working fields or orchards. Opportunities to wash up before lunch were generally nonexistent.

Recreation.-A professional beekeeper can tell whether or not his bees are contented by their buzz. A professional physical-education and recreation worker with girls, said on leaving a WLA camp one evening, "That's a happy camp; I can tell by the kind of noise coming from it." The campers visited were generally contented, getting up a "show" to be given in the auditorium, planning to go to a dance at a nearby air-training camp; talking over an all-day lake trip on which an employer was going to take them, going down town for ice cream, playing baseball with a girls' team from the town, singing around the piano, going swimming in the lake. But when work was slack and days of idleness resulted, when the women were on some job where pay was low, spirits went down and workers became discontented and sometimes left, particularly in long-season camps.

Regulations.-Since in most camps part of the workers were of high-school age, camp regulations, or a code of conduct, had to be set up. This was often done by the workers themselves. Regulations were simple, consisting chiefly of a bed-time "lights-out" hour, usually 9:30 to 10 p.m. and later hours for Saturday night and occasionally one other night; no "dates with pick-ups," boy friends to be brought to camp to meet the supervisor; and in general such conduct as would be approved by the majority of parents. Campers who persistently disregarded the standards were sent home.

Supervision.-The person most important to the success of the camp was the supervisor. She had to be well chosen, someone who liked and understood young women, saw the significance of her job, was really interested in it; someone who could run the camp well; give the women real leadership, and maintain discipline and morale. Sometimes additional leadership came from exceptionally fine personalities among the workers. Without really good supervision and direction, few camps would succeed. The good leadership of State WLA supervisors, who passed on all the camp supervisors, and of county agents or farm advisers, who made the contacts with the farmers and attended to many details of the camps, also had much to do with the success of the camps.

Women who attended.-Who were these Land Army recruits who made such a good reputation for themselves? They were for the most part city girls who had never been on a farm, - office workers, factory and war-industry workers,

professional women, waitresses, beauty-shop operators, college and high-school students, servicemen's wives - women who took their vacations, gave up nonessential jobs, or went to work for the first time or so rearranged family responsibilities for a while that they could work on a farm. They did it not only because it was a new experience in a new environment, widely advertised as a patriotic duty at which they expected to get reasonably good pay and fairly low living cost, but also, perhaps, because some of them had a love and longing for the country. At least, one girl wrote back, after she had returned to work in a big industrial city, "The thing I like to remember most and liked the best was the beautiful ride in the early morning from the camp to the farm and back to the camp at night."

SUMMARY

Travel through the Midwest States disclosed that certain trends gradually were taking shape in the summer of 1944.

1. No State seemed to feel that the labor needs had not been met, although the short supply of experienced farm labor (male) was generally recognized.

2. Everywhere farm families were doing far more work themselves than ever before, and this meant that the additional farm labor came from farm women, girls, and young boys.

3. Most of this family labor was unpaid. Wages were high and many farm families decided to try to do the work themselves rather than pay very high wages to men who were often second-rate laborers.

4. Besides the women and girls of farm families, nonfarm women made a real contribution in corn detasseling and harvest work. Many of them would have been glad to do more work, but the feeling against them, though not so great as it had been, still was strong enough to keep them out of general farm work. Occasionally nonfarm women were placed on farms and generally made good.

CONCLUSION

Women's Possibilities

The very fact that so much of the farm work of the States studied is done by machinery made it more adaptable to women - even to nonfarm women - than much of the hard, tedious, hand labor that was generally turned over to them. Indeed, more than one farm woman said it would be quite a rest if her husband would come in and do some of her chores or housework and let her go out and ride the tractor for a while. Women have proved themselves so capable in handling industrial machinery that they could undoubtedly do as well with farm machinery. Had farm families been willing to use for tractor work, nonfarm women trained in their own State schools, both farm men and women might have worked under less pressure.

Unquestionably farm wives worked under heavy pressure. How long they could keep it up, especially those who ordinarily had not done much outside work, might be subject to question.

If the need for additional farm workers should ever become still more acute, there is no reason at all why town or city women and girls could not and would not learn to operate farm machinery as easily as their husbands and brothers have learned to fly planes and operate tanks, and the majority of them would find it more fun than picking string beans or potatoes day after day. So would the farmer or his wife.

Recruiting of Women

Advance organization.--This is essential recruiting of nonfarm women for farm work, whether it is for day-haul or for camp groups. But farmers are usually unwilling to make any commitments as to the amount or kind of help they will need, particularly as to "female help." The good record made by women in 1943 and 1944 will, it is hoped, make farmers more ready to say in 1945 how many women they want for what work, at what dates (approximately), and for how long. If that could be done, the job of recruiting them would be lessened immeasurably.

Advance information.--Thoroughly honest and complete information should be available to all applicants about the work opportunities available. This should include the kind of work to be done (a real explanation of what it involves), the hours of work to be expected (which should include mention of lunch period, Sunday work or overtime), the rate of pay (if piece work, not what an exceptional worker might earn, but what the average worker does earn). Some advice on suitable clothing for women should be included, and, if lunch is to be brought by workers, they should be told. Transportation provisions should be made clear.

If the recruiting is for camp groups, additional information should be given on housing, cost of board, the equipment as well as clothing recruits should bring, and, for the benefit of parents or families of younger women, the amount of supervision and responsibility assumed by the Women's Land Army for the management of the camp, including the attention given to health, sanitation, and recreation.

Only when such information is freely and carefully given in advance can women feel that they know what they are going into, and any resentment they might otherwise feel at misrepresentation be avoided.

Publicity.--It takes a long time for a new idea to percolate to the general public. Even in 1944, there still were people, even those who wanted to work, who were quite unfamiliar with the WLA program. The news is not spread far and wide by one feature article alone, but by steady plugging in press and radio, by talks, and through the conversation of the women who have tried farm work and liked it. Farmers who have tried women's work and found it satisfactory can help a great deal. The more explicit publicity can be, the more likely it is to attract recruits;

and in recruiting city women, being directed to a city address means more than being directed to the county agent. The timing of publicity, not too far in advance and not so late that recruits have made other plans, is also a matter requiring careful planning.

Supervision.-The real key to the successful employment of women is the supervision or management, of groups. Sometimes, if a group is not too large, this may come from the farmer himself. Sometimes, when he is too busy, a work leader - a worker in charge of small groups of not over 12 to 15 - has been found to work out admirably. The work leader not only helped to maintain cooperative relationship between the farmer and the group in the field, but, if the group came from a camp, she acted as liaison between the camp supervisor and the group. Such groups had a feeling of teamwork and better production resulted, especially as the leader worked along with the group. Since the leader's duties were different, she was paid on a different basis.

Leadership training.-The idea of Michigan, to have a preliminary training period for work leaders, might well be used in other places. A shortage of women qualified to act as work leaders or camp supervisors existed everywhere yet there were many young women who had actually done farm work in the past 2 years and some who had not, who were, because of their experience and great interest, well qualified for such jobs. But they did not know where such jobs might be found, nor did those who needed them know where they could find them, and it was largely chance when the job and the girl got together. If the WLA program is continued, more attention should be given to estimating probable needs for supervision and training of supervisory workers.

Accomplishments and Future.-If the employment of nonfarm women had done nothing more for these women than introduce them to farm life, giving them a first-hand knowledge of what is involved in the production of our food and the sort of people who run our farms, and if the nonfarm women who worked had done nothing more for the farmers than to show them that the women of the cities had a great and friendly interest in country life and in all its complex problems and were on the whole pleasant and capable workers, the Women's Land Army project would have been worthwhile from social and educational points of view. But the women accomplished a vast amount of work for the farmers the country over, did it well, with zest, and to the farmers' satisfaction. They received wages, not large, but a little better in 1944 than in 1943, and had the satisfaction of contributing to a vital war industry.

The more ambitious, intelligent young women may not want to go on indefinitely with nothing but so-called unskilled hand labor to look forward to, even if every year makes them more expert. Whether they can be given more responsibility and more difficult jobs, time and need alone will tell.

Before the war many women now in war industries have always gone to farms for seasonal work. Whether farmers will need organized assistance and farm-labor camps after the war are questions to be settled in the future.

FARMER-EMPLOYER COMMENTS

Farmers who employed WIA workers seemed to be of one opinion as far as these women were concerned:

A large-scale peach grower reported, "The girls are running $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 weeks ahead of schedule. We now have the peaches all thinned."

One man who had 25 women cherry pickers said, "I didn't think they would be much good, but in an hour and a half after they started I knew enough, and went back to get 25 more." (He couldn't get these additional workers, however; all had been spoken for.) . . . Said a farmer's wife, "It's the best set-up for cherry picking we ever had. You must have chosen good ones for us." . . . According to another cherry grower, "Many girls set up ladders all right when they have to." . . . "They don't kick about going up high," another grower remarked. "Don't do as much hollering as these kids raised around here." . . . Said a cherry grower's wife, "Girls are just fine. They do good work. Some are fast, some slow, but that's true everywhere."

Farmers had this to say about corn detasseling: "Fine type of girls and as bright as they come." . . . "More deft with hands, do a better job than men." . . . "Girls 18 and up are somewhat better, more steady, than the younger girls."

1944 RECORD

Throughout the United States, approximately 600,000 placements of women farm workers have been made in 1944 (up to November 1) by the local placement offices of the Extension Farm Labor Program. Most of these women worked on a "day haul" basis, being transported to work from their homes in the morning and back at night. Many others lived in WLA camps located in areas needing emergency farm labor and worked on nearby farms. Some lived on the farms where they worked. These groups included homemakers, wives of servicemen, business and professional women, college girls, teachers, and industrial workers.

